

County of Los Angeles
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

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July 16, 2008

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Philip L. Browning, Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'P. Browning', written over the 'FROM' line.

SUBJECT: REPORT ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM FOR THE HOMELESS, ELDERLY, AND DISABLED USING ELECTRONIC BENEFIT (EBT) CARDS TO PURCHASE PREPARED MEALS (BOARD ORDER #38 - FEBRUARY 4, 2003)

This is to provide you with an update on the Restaurant Meals Program for Homeless, Elderly, and Disabled Food Stamp Participants using Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Cards to purchase prepared meals. As you may recall, the Restaurant Meals Program allows homeless, elderly, and disabled Food Stamp participants to purchase prepared meals using their EBT cards at restaurants that have a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the County and have been certified by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to accept Food Stamp benefits.

The Restaurant Meals Program for the Homeless, Elderly and Disabled has experienced substantial growth since implementation in July of 2005. Currently, we have 371 signed MOUs, including 315 restaurants participating in the program, and another 56 restaurants in various stages of processing by the USDA, FNS and DPSS.

Although the program has experienced substantial growth in participation and utilization over the past year, increasing program awareness and utilization among the homeless has been our greatest challenge. To address this challenge, the Restaurant Meals Program staff collaborated with the General Relief Homeless Prevention Initiative (HPI) staff to make presentations and provide information on Food Stamps and the Restaurant Meals Program to Shelters and agencies that were receiving HPI training and information, in order to increase program awareness and utilization.

Staff continues to utilize the following strategies:

- Making presentations to community partners and agencies that serve the homeless.
- Working with restaurant owners to develop a strong relationship.
- Mailing Restaurant Meals Program brochures and interest letters to restaurants throughout the County.

The chart shown below includes Restaurant Meals Data from November 2007 through May 2008. Since my last update in January 2008, there has been a continuous increase in Restaurant Meals Program participation. The number of sales transactions in May 2008 reflected a 65% increase over November 2007, and the amount of sales for the same period reflected 52% increase during the same period.

RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM DATA

MONTH AND YEAR	NUMBER OF SALES TRANSACTIONS	NUMBER OF RESTAURANTS WITH TRANSACTIONS	AMOUNT OF SALES	AVERAGE TRANSACTION AMOUNT
November 2007	29,940	204	\$228,097.00	\$ 7.61
December 2007	36,275	209	\$256,541.00	\$ 7.07
January 2008	39,136	209	\$270,721.00	\$ 6.92
February 2008	41,258	205	\$277,663.00	\$ 6.73
March 2008	46,486	222	\$315,403.00	\$ 6.79
April 2008	47,413	247	\$327,799.00	\$ 6.91
May 2008	49,261	265	\$347,134.00	\$ 7.05

Discussions with McDonalds' Corporate Offices and Taco Bell remain at a stand still. We have begun discussions with Wendy's, Denny's, and El Gallo Giro Restaurants. Denny's and Wendy's Restaurants will start with one restaurant as a test before committing other restaurants. El Gallo Giro has already committed to add seven restaurants, which will be signed later this month.

Our goal is to provide participants with a variety of meal choices.

I will provide you with our next semi-annual report in January 2009.

PLB:bs

- c: Chief Executive Officer
County Counsel
Deputy Chief Executive Officer
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors